



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
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April 2, 2010

TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Wendy L. Watanabe", is written over the printed name and title.

SUBJECT: **REPORT ON THE 2007-2008 CIVIL GRAND JURY'S
RECOMMENDATION TO REVIEW PROMISED SAVINGS FROM
UNIFICATION OF THE SHERIFF'S AND LOS ANGELES POLICE
DEPARTMENTS' CRIME LABS**

In 2007, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) moved their crime labs into a single, shared facility. The 2007-2008 County Civil Grand Jury recommended that the Auditor-Controller work with the Los Angeles City Controller to quantify the promised savings from unification of the Sheriff's and LAPD's crime labs.

In consultation with the City Controller, we have reviewed the unification of the crime labs. Our review indicates that there are benefits from having both labs housed in a single facility such as enhanced collaboration in training classes. However, the Sheriff's and LAPD did not project or promise any savings from the move to a single facility. As a result, the agencies did not track or quantify any savings that may have been achieved. In addition, we noted that the benefits from the use of a single facility are generally not quantifiable.

Background and Scope

The 1996-1997 County Civil Grand Jury concluded that the Sheriff's and LAPD's existing crime labs were obsolete and needed to be expanded/replaced. The Grand Jury suggested the Sheriff's and LAPD consider consolidating their crime labs into a

single agency to reduce costs and improve efficiencies. The Grand Jury estimated that consolidating the Sheriff's and LAPD's labs into a single agency and other changes might result in savings of \$2.9 million a year.

Sheriff's and LAPD management indicated that they did not believe it was feasible to consolidate the two agencies' crime lab services into a single agency. They believed that differences in forensic policies, possible conflicts over operations and prioritization of cases, and additional administrative requirements made consolidating the services unworkable. However, in 2001, the Sheriff's, LAPD and California State University, Los Angeles worked together to obtain \$96 million in State funding for a joint crime lab facility and education center, the Hertzberg-Davis Forensic Science Center (HDFSC), located on the University campus. The HDFSC was completed in May 2007 and houses both the Sheriff's and LAPD's independent crime labs, and the University's forensic science classes.

We reviewed prior studies/reports on the crime labs, the lab operating agreement between the Sheriff's and LAPD, and other related correspondence/information. We also interviewed Sheriff's, LAPD and State management/staff.

Review Summary

Our review indicates the Sheriff's and LAPD did not agree with the 1996-1997 Grand Jury recommendation to combine their crime labs into a single agency, and did not project or promise any savings from moving the labs to a single facility to obtain State funding for the HDFSC. As a result, there were no promised savings from the unification of the crime labs that we could quantify or validate as recommended by the 2007-2008 Grand Jury.

It also should be noted that because the Sheriff's and LAPD decided not to pursue a single crime lab agency, a significant amount of the savings projected in the 1996-1997 Civil Grand Jury report could not be achieved. However, in 2001, the Sheriff's and LAPD did proceed with the joint crime lab facility and the sharing of certain resources. Both agencies indicated that this has resulted in a number of benefits and improved efficiencies, including enhanced collaboration in training classes, opportunities to consult/benchmark with the other agency, facility space/equipment sharing, mutual assistance and some minor cost savings on some supplies. However, the Sheriff's and LAPD do not track those savings. In addition, because benefits such as training class collaboration are not tangible, they generally are not quantifiable.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with Sheriff's and LAPD management who agreed with our findings and conclusions.

We thank Sheriff's and LAPD management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during our review. Please call if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Jim Schneiderman at (213) 253-0101.

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